

Northumberland news

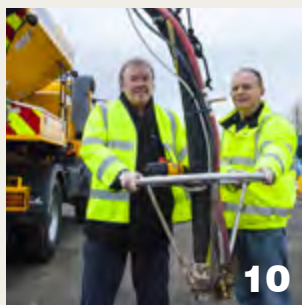
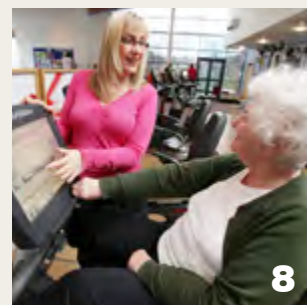


Residents' Festival

New affordable housing

Jetpatcher tackles pothole problem





Northumberland News

Now available online, by email or in print.

Northumberland News is a quarterly magazine packed with features and news articles written specifically for county residents.

Published in December, March, June and September it is distributed free of charge by Northumberland County Council. Every effort is made to ensure that all information is accurate at the time of publication.

If you would like to receive Northumberland News in large print, Braille, audio, or in another format or language please contact us.

New local phone numbers (see page 4)

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Top attractions take part in residents' weekend

Top attractions throughout Northumberland will be offering free entry and discounts to people living in the county during the annual Residents' Festival on 29 and 30 March this year.

The festival, known as 'Our People Our Places', aims to celebrate the fact that Northumberland is a fantastic place to live and to give something back to residents in the county.

Throughout the weekend; castles, gardens, stately homes and museums will be opening their doors free of charge or offering generous discounts to visitors from Northumberland.

The event is organised by Northumberland County Council in partnership with leading visitor attractions from across the county.

This year it is set to be the biggest and best yet with over 30 attractions in the line up.

These include: Alnwick Gardens, Bamburgh Castle, Chillingham Castle, Cragside, Corbridge Roman Town, Hexham Abbey, Housesteads Roman Fort, Kielder Water and Forest Park, Newbiggin Maritime Centre, Paxton House Gallery and Country Park, Wallington, Warkworth Castle and Woodhorn Museum.



New attractions this year include: White House Farm Centre, Blyth Battery, Flodden 1513 Ecomuseum, Heatherslaw Cornmill and Seaton Delaval Hall. Northumberland Leisure Centres are offering a buy one swim, get one free over the festival weekend.

Northumberland County Councillor Val Tyler, policy board member for community infrastructure and culture, said: "This festival will give people who live in the county the opportunity to explore and enjoy some of the venues that we have on our doorstep. There is

something for all ages."

Residents will need special vouchers to receive free or discounted entry to the attractions. These can be downloaded from the council's website on: residentsfestival.northumberland.gov.uk

"Explore and enjoy some of the venues that we have on our doorstep"

They are available in the Residents' Festival leaflets, displayed in local libraries, county council offices, tourist information centres and sports centres. Cut out vouchers will also be placed in adverts in the local press.

Ring council on local line



The county council is now offering customers who ring its contact centre a choice of local telephone numbers to call from.

All calls will still be answered centrally and there will be no changes to the actual services provided.

The alternative local numbers were introduced alongside the existing 0845 number after an assessment of the cost to customers making calls to the council.

The council makes no money from calls to the numbers but many mobile phone companies charge for calls to 0845 lines. However, most mobile providers offer free calls to local area code numbers as part of free minute packages.

Local line numbers may also be cheaper for customers to call from their home phones, depending on the provider and the payment package in place.

Councillor Grant Davey, Leader of Northumberland County Council, said: "This is an issue

that we've been concerned about for some time and when our administration was elected in the summer, we asked officers to look at how this could be resolved.

"We are committed to providing the best possible customer service and listening to what residents tell us. We know there were some concerns about potential costs of using the 0845 number and we're now able to offer customers a choice of local area numbers covering the whole county."

The new numbers are:

- **01670 627000** (areas covered include: Ashington, Bedlington, Blyth, Cramlington, Felton, Hartburn, Longhorsley, Lynemouth, Morpeth, Red Row, Scots Gap, Stannington, Ulgham and Whalton).
- **01661 520005** (areas covered include: Belsay, Ponteland, Prudhoe, Stamfordham, Stocksfield and Wylam).
- **01665 660733** (areas covered include: Alnmouth, Alnwick, Amble, Charlton Mires, Chathill, Embleton, Longframlington, Longhoughton, Powburn, Seahouses, Shilbottle and Whittingham).
- **01668 260355** (areas covered include: Bamburgh, Belford, Chatton, Milfield, Wooler and Wooperton).
- **01669 220355** (areas covered include: Harbottle, Hepple, Netherton and Rothbury).
- **01830 570085** (areas covered include: Kirkwhelpington and Otterburn).
- **01289 540455** (areas covered include: Ancroft, Beal, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Holy Island (Lindisfarne), Lowick, Norham and Paxton).
- **01434 400388** (areas covered include: Allendale, Allenheads, Bellingham, Blanchland, Corbridge, Great Whittington, Haltwhistle, Haydon Bridge, Hexham, Humshaugh, Newbrough, Riding Mill and Slaley).
- **0191 5009044** (areas covered include: Seaton Delaval).
- **01890 230233** (areas covered include: Branxton, Carham, Cornhill on Tweed, Ford and Etal and Kilham).

Council approves 'fair budget'

Cuts of £32.5m for the next financial year have been formally approved by the county council.

A report setting out the savings plan for 2014/15 was approved at the full council meeting of elected members.

The spending plans include more support for schools, affordable housing, economic growth and free parking where local communities feel it will boost the economy.

Members agreed not to accept the Council Tax Freeze Grant for 2014-15 and approved an increase in council tax of 1.98 per cent (the council's element).

Councillor Dave Ledger, deputy leader of Northumberland County Council, said: "Setting this budget was a real challenge but our aims were always to be fair to the residents of Northumberland while maintaining essential services and making improvements wherever possible.

"Some of the measures we've taken will not only ensure that cuts are fair to residents across the county - but also deliver key improvements on things like affordable housing, economic growth, schools support, local services and free parking where local communities think it will boost the economy.

"For example introducing free parking has real benefits for residents, businesses and visitors but we left the decision to local communities, who have been consulted throughout this budget process."

The council also agreed to

provide an extra £600,000 funding to accelerate the programme of pothole repairs across the county, bringing the backlog under control by June 2014 – three months earlier than anticipated.

Councillor Grant Davey, Leader of Northumberland County Council, added: "Despite the cuts there has been many positive achievements over the past nine months.

"We have been determined to tackle the damage caused to our road network by severe weather over recent years. This commitment of this administration to reducing the number of potholes should be welcomed by everyone who use the roads.

"We're also committed to maintaining front-line services, increasing jobs through partnerships with health and parish councils while we now have 138 young apprentices working with us.

"We've also reintroduced the council's Community Chest Scheme which supports activities that will benefit and are needed by local communities. It is open to any voluntary or community, not-for-profit groups or organisations based in, or predominantly serving Northumberland."

The council has already pledged to respond to issues raised in the public consultation and is

currently reviewing the options around post-16 transport and the youth service.

Councillor Davey added: "On post-16 transport we are looking at a range of options which will be subject to a separate public consultation exercise. No final decisions have been made on this but Northumberland is currently the only council that funds it in this way, and the ultimate aim must be to encourage and enable students to study at their local establishment.

"We will also look again at the proposed reductions to the youth service. This review will look at whether the savings targets could be achieved in a different way and will include more specific consultation with young people," he said.

It also takes into account the views expressed as part of an online survey, which was launched to explain the challenges facing the county council and to give residents and stakeholders the opportunity to influence the budget setting process.

However, Councillor Davey warned that the financial situation was unlikely to improve in the near future.

He said: "It is clear we are going to face more significant cuts in the coming years and work is already underway to plan for the future."

The council's Medium Term Financial Plan now estimates that Northumberland will need to save another £130m over the next four years.

"There has been many positive achievements over the past nine months"

"Cuts are fair to residents across the county"

"Work is already underway to plan for the future"



County engine is Paraguay bound

Photo: left to right, IFRA members Lisa Wood and Dave Hume, chief fire officer Alex Bennett and station manager Stephen Kennedy.

A Northumberland fire engine is preparing to set off on a 6,000 mile journey to help make communities in Paraguay safer.

The fully equipped Volvo fire appliance has been donated by Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service to the International Fire and Rescue Association – a charity which arranges for the donation and delivery of firefighting equipment to countries around the world that have few resources to help protect their communities.

The fire engine had served the public of Northumberland for

nearly 19 years, during which time it covered all areas of the county.

Charity director David Kay said: “Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service, and the people of Northumberland should be very proud that this appliance will continue to serve and save lives in a country where the volunteers, although keen and enthusiastic, are limited by lack of equipment.

“This appliance will be a major boost to the safety of the public and the firefighters in Paraguay.”

Alex Bennett, chief fire officer for Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service, said: “We’re

pleased to be able to support this charity, which does sterling work to help countries which are much less fortunate than ours.”

Councillor Dave Ledger, deputy leader of Northumberland County Council, said: “It’s great that when appliances and equipment reach the end of their use in the county they can still play a vital role in protecting people and property elsewhere. We wish this project every success.”

This is the sixth appliance to be donated to the International Fire and Rescue Association, which has helped modernise fire and rescue services in Albania, Romania, Bosnia and Paraguay.

New Vera novel launched in Morpeth

Award-winning crime writer Ann Cleeves was in Morpeth recently for the official launch of her gripping new novel, Harbour Street.

The book is the sixth in Ann Cleeves' crime novel series, Vera, which has been adapted for TV and is now a major ITV detective drama, filmed on location in the north east and starring Brenda Blethyn.

The event was organised by Northumberland County Council and took place in the town's historic Chantry building.

A packed house turned out to meet the best-selling writer, who was present to give a talk, a reading and to sign books.



Photo: Councillor Kath Nisbet, civic head of Northumberland County Council, with author Ann Cleeves, who was at Morpeth Chantry for the launch of her new book, Harbour Street.

Record number of young people vote in Youth Elections

Record numbers of voters across county schools had their say in the Northumberland Youth Cabinet and Youth Parliament elections during a December ballot.

The Youth Cabinet is a group of young people that meet with decision makers to ensure the voice of their peers is heard. When elected, Youth Cabinet members are tasked with turning their manifestos into projects and plans for their term of office.

Annabelle Cooper (Duchess Community High School, Alnwick) and Erin Wall (Ashington High School) were elected as deputy Members of Youth Parliament (MYP). Annabelle and Erin will deputise for the current MYPs before becoming MYPs themselves in their second year.

The five new members of the Northumberland Youth Cabinet are: Ryan Hunter (Blyth Academy), Luke James (Cramlington Learning Village), Charlotte McAndrew (St Benet Biscop), Georgia Watson-Hall (Astley High School) and Erin Wall.

Exercise on referral in Northumberland

Most people are aware that being active is good for your health, but knowing what activities are suitable can be very daunting if you have a medical condition. The Northumberland exercise on referral scheme is here to help you.

Northumberland County Council leisure facilities are working in partnership with local GP surgeries to encourage anyone who has a medical condition such as high blood pressure, heart disease, or who is overweight to become more active.

The scheme lasts for six months and is there to encourage you to make the first steps in making activity a regular part of your life. After a one to one consultation with a member of the fitness team, you will be able to attend scheme sessions at your local leisure facility. There are further one-to-one appointments after three and six months. Sessions include activities such as using the gym, fitness classes, swimming and racquet sports. Consultations are free but there is a charge for each activity session.

Elizabeth Gibson, 72, a stroke and arthritis sufferer is currently taking part at Wentworth Leisure Centre in Hexham. She really enjoys the sessions and feels that the scheme has been very beneficial to her health.

“The exercise programme has completely changed my life. I have more confidence and a better quality of life as I now live alone, but I am able to get out more and walk every day, something I haven't been able to do for a while.”

Interested? Next time you are at your surgery, ask your GP or practice nurse about whether you would be suitable for a referral to the scheme. If you would like more details about the scheme in your area of Northumberland please contact Coral Hanson (01670 622188) email: chanson@bval.co.uk




Photo: Julie McPherson, exercise on referral co-ordinator with Mrs Gibson who is using a rowing machine as part of her healthy life exercise programme.

A clean bill of health

The health and wellbeing board has been established to reduce health inequalities by bringing together organisations involved in buying and providing health services, adult social care and children's services and encouraging better partnership working.

Councillor Scott Dickinson, chair of the board, has been meeting patients and visiting staff and services across the county to see that they are working well together, helping people to stay active.

These are a few of the places visited:

Foundry House



Councillor Dickinson visited Foundry House, Bedlington, where he observed an alert system for older and vulnerable people in Northumberland and met the contact centre staff who man the telephones.



Photo: Mark Robertson, Northumbria Healthcare NHS, Councillor Dickinson, Hilary Brown, Joint North Locality Director and Director for End of Life Care, Cancer and Carers and Cynthia Atkins, Vice Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

The health and wellbeing launch

The Northumberland Health and Wellbeing launch was held in January at The Swan Leisure Centre, Berwick-upon-Tweed offering the opportunity for residents to give their views and have a free health MOT.

North East Ambulance Service



Councillor Dickinson took to the roads with paramedics from the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) based in Amble, to learn more about their role in the local community and how they help patients. NEAS deal with roughly 50,000 incidents every month, with their 500-strong fleet of vehicles clocking up an astonishing 10 million miles each year.

Berwick-upon-Tweed Infirmary



The Berwick-upon-Tweed Infirmary currently has 30 elderly assessment and rehabilitation beds. The hospital has a nurse-led minor injuries unit supported by GPs. It is open 24 hours and has a busy outpatient department holding over 50 clinics a month. Councillor Dickinson and Daljit Lally, executive director of wellbeing and community health services, visited the unit.



Jetpatcher helps to clear backlog of potholes

Photo: Councillor Ian Swithenbank, policy board member for streetcare and environment with Andy Olive, environmental quality inspector testing the new Jetpatcher.

Northumberland County Council is using the very latest in technology to combat the potholes affecting the county's roads.

Over recent years, severe winter weather has caused significant damage to the highway network. This has led to an increase in potholes in recent years.

Now, local services employees are armed with two new allies in the fight against pothole defects – the Jetpatcher and the road mender vehicle. Known as the 'hot box' it keeps material warm

for much longer, making it easier to spread on the road surface.

Following a successful trial, the council has bought two Jetpatching units that carry all the necessary equipment and materials to repair potholes.

The Jetpatcher has proven to be a cost effective alternative to conventional temporary repair fix methods, improving productivity by 60%.

Councillor Ian Swithenbank, policy board member for streetcare and environment,

visited the council's Bearl depot, near Hexham, to see a demonstration of the Jetpatcher unit in action.

He said: "Repairing potholes on the county's roads is a real challenge. We are moving from a reactive to a proactive approach to pothole repair.

"The Jetpatcher machines we use in the north and the west of the county, and the road mending vehicle, are helping to make much more long-lasting repairs. We have been able to make substantial improvements to our unclassified roads and some C roads."

Anyone can report a pothole online at www.northumberland.gov.uk

Youth enterprise fund back for second year

The council's Northumberland Youth Enterprise Fund (NYEF) has helped another group of budding entrepreneurs this winter, building on the success of last year's initiative.

The NYEF is a small grant fund available to Northumberland residents aged between 16 and 25 to assist with developing a business idea.

Councillor Robert Arckless, Northumberland County Council's policy board member for children's services, said: "Encouraging young people to take the initiative and develop their entrepreneurial side can inspire change in all aspects of their lives. This is an opportunity that requires a lot of hard work, but as we have seen from the scheme over the past two years, the rewards can be great.

"This support allows Northumberland's young people to find out what it is like to be their own boss and pursue their career ambitions while gaining valuable skills and experience that will bode well for their future careers."

There are several success stories, including Polly Smith, aged 17, a florist from Alnwick, who received £500 to help towards the costs of setting up Polly's Petals. With NYEF funding, she was able to buy some initial stock, packaging and have a stall at Alnwick's Christmas market.



Photo: Polly Smith from Alnwick set up Polly's Petals with the help of the Northumberland Youth Enterprise Fund.

Georgia Cross, 19 from Berwick, was awarded a grant of £400 to help set up her photography business, GMC Photography, and Steven from Pegswood received a grant of £480 to help get his agricultural contracting business off the ground, using the funding to purchase insurance for his business and tools.

As well as receiving financial support, successful applicants work with the employability and skills service to identify what

further support they would benefit from. The enterprise team contact agencies such as the Prince's Trust and Business Northumberland to ensure appropriate expert advice and guidance are received.

The council offers a range of support and opportunities for Northumberland's young people. To find out about other opportunities, including the brand new Business Sparks programme, visit www.northumberland.gov.uk/skills

Environmental champions take on county's litter hot spots

Photo: Dot Edwards and Gillian Harmeston picking litter at Cramlington Woods.

Northumberland County Council's LOVE Northumberland initiative and Keep Britain Tidy have joined forces again to celebrate people who take on the community problem of litter.

LOVE Northumberland's environmental champions do an excellent job collecting bags of rubbish and leaving them for the council to collect.

One of the community champions is Dot Edwards who lives in Seaton Delaval. Dot spends many hours every week around her local area picking up litter, reporting fly tipping and alerting the council to litter hot spots.

She can't understand why people want to spoil the county's beauty spots. She said: "How do people allow it to get so bad? People just expect the council to tidy up after them. I pick up from beauty spots where people take animals and children. If I don't do it there'll be nowhere nice for people to go."

Dot has recently been joined on her litter picks by Gillian Harmeston from Newbiggin. She added: "We wouldn't be able to go out and do this if it wasn't for the partnership with the council who come and pick up the bags and provide equipment."

Since joining the LOVE Northumberland campaign, Dot has been supported by the council who she has a great relationship with and has

encouraged others to join the LOVE Northumberland initiative.

Councillor Ian Swithenbank, policy board member for streetcare and environment, said: "We would encourage anyone doing their bit for their community to let the council know and find out how we can support you in your effort. We can put you in contact with like-minded people and celebrate the good work you do with your community and the county."

For more information about LOVE Northumberland visit www.northumberland.gov.uk/LOVE

To find out more about Keep Britain Tidy's BIG tidy up and to sign up visit www.KeepBritaintidy.org

Garden bins are easy and convenient

Northumberland's popular garden waste collection scheme has been launched again for the 2014 growing season.

Last year 7,200 tonnes of garden waste was recycled into a rich compost and soil conditioner and made available for local people to purchase to reuse on their gardens.

All residents that received collections last year have been sent a letter inviting them to sign up again.

People who haven't received collections before are also invited to get in touch, to see if there are collections in their area.

It costs only £24 for 20 collections and saves the time, hassle and cost of taking garden waste to a household waste centre.

If you sign up you could also be entitled to an incentive. Existing customers who book the service online this year will be entered into a free prize draw to win a garden centre voucher.

New customers will be entered into a free monthly draw to be the lucky winner of a refund of their fee – giving them free service for 2014.

To find out more about the scheme visit www.northumberland.gov.uk/garden



Easter and May bank holiday bin collections:

Remember that during the week of Easter Monday, and each May bank holiday week, all bin collections across Northumberland will be one day late – normal Monday collections on Tuesday, Tuesday on Wednesday etc. You can check all your bin collection days on the bin checker at www.northumberland.gov.uk/waste

Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital gets the seal of approval

NHS Medical Director and author of the recent Urgent and Emergency Care Review, Sir Bruce Keogh, has given the seal of approval to the new Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital at Cramlington.

Sir Bruce carried out the topping out ceremony at the new hospital that will provide specialist care around the clock for the 500,000 people of North Tyneside and Northumberland.

During his visit he met consultants who will be working in the new hospital and said: "This project sets the standard for other NHS organisations in the country, it will bring something really special to the people of the region, it reflects great ambition. Today I have seen a glimpse of the future."

"Today I have seen a glimpse of the future"



Photo: Professor Sir Bruce Keogh, Medical Director for the NHS, outside the Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital.

In his recent review of urgent care services Sir Bruce called for larger Major Emergency Centres, with the right facilities and expertise to treat emergency patients.

Northumbria Healthcare's aspiration is for the new hospital to become one of the first Major Emergency Care Centres in the country. The hospital is the first in the country dedicated to providing specialist care seven days a week.

Jacqueline Gregson, an emergency care consultant, said the new hospital helped her decide on her chosen career path. She said: "It's very exciting and nice to be part of such a forward thinking trust; Sir Bruce Keogh's

visit is a ringing endorsement for the new hospital."

Seriously ill or injured patients will be seen by an A&E consultant when they arrive at the hospital and will then see a specialist in their condition who will have rapid access to diagnostics, ensuring quicker treatment and better outcomes.



Photo: Paul Brayson, construction director; Birju Rana, project director; Jacqueline Gregson, A&E consultant; Professor Sir Bruce Keogh; and Chris Biggin, A&E consultant.



Northumberland smokers get ready for battle on No Smoking Day

Residents are being encouraged to quit on national No Smoking Day this year.

No Smoking Day will be on Wednesday 12 March and the theme is 'V for victory' to inspire smokers to win the fight against cigarettes.

The Northumberland NHS Stop Smoking Service, which is provided by Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, is urging smokers to use the experience of local quitters to motivate them to quit.

Alison Nichol, Northumberland Stop Smoking Service manager at the trust said: "We know it isn't easy but there's always lots of free support available. In fact,



Photo: Sarah, from Ashington won the fight against cigarettes thanks to help from Northumberland NHS Stop Smoking Service.

you're four times more likely to succeed with our help."

Mother-of-three Sarah, from Ashington, who quit smoking with help from the service said: "Knowing my smoking was affecting my kids' health as well as mine really spurred me on to quit for good.

"My stop smoking advisor was fantastic. She offered me a range of things, but I found

patches and lozenges worked best for me."

Almost as soon as she quit, Sarah noticed her health improving.

She added: "As well as my breathing getting better, my skin was brighter, the dark circles under my eyes disappeared and my hair is now not as greasy. It's also made a massive difference money-wise too."



What would you do with an extra £2500, a year? ...take the holiday of a lifetime



Northumberland NHS Stop Smoking Service

If you smoke 20 a day and quit today, you could save yourself £2,500 by this time next year. Take control of your health and your finances by going smokefree and reap the rewards. You're four times more likely to quit with the help of NHS stop smoking services.

To find out more about our weekly FREE stop smoking sessions taking place near you, contact Northumberland NHS Stop Smoking Service:

**01670 813 135
www.northumbria.nhs.uk/stopsmoking**

Ambitious plans to modernise street lighting

Northumberland is home to the largest area of protected night sky in Europe. Northumberland National Park and Kielder Water and Forest Park were granted dark skies status in December.

The county council supported the successful bid and is now set to launch its own ambitious £25 million project to modernise all street lighting lamps throughout the county, beginning in May this year. Up to 16,000 street lighting columns will be fitted with new eco-friendly and full controlled LED lantern units with the capability to vary

the lighting levels, while maintaining public safety. This will significantly reduce light pollution, lower energy and maintenance costs and cut carbon emissions.

The ambitious project will reduce light pollution, lower energy and maintenance costs and cut carbon emissions.

The council has also made a commitment that all public buildings and signs will be down lighted with LEDs instead of floodlighting with tungsten lights.

“We expect to make savings of 50% in the maintenance budget through the investment in new technology”

As with many similar authorities, Northumberland has seen a big increase in street lighting energy costs over recent years, along with the introduction of the carbon tax. A significant proportion of the lighting stock in the county is relatively old and inefficient. The current street

lights are using excessive energy compared to modern units and cost more to maintain.

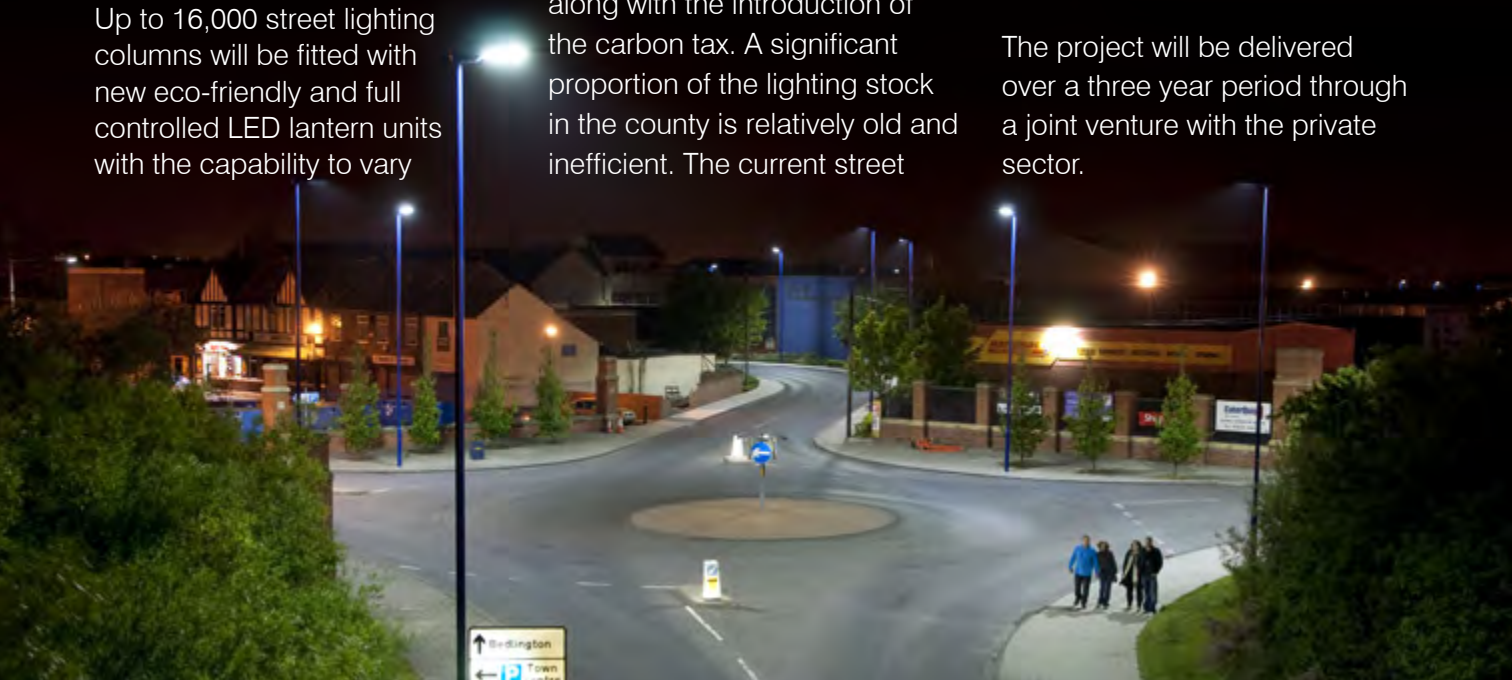
The council has secured funding on an ‘invest to save’ basis. This funding will be repaid over 25 years from the anticipated budget savings. Councillor Ian Swithenbank, policy board member for streetcare and environment, said: “This is a huge task to completely modernise our street lighting in

the county.

We also plan to and we are committed to making massive energy savings.

“We expect to make savings of 50% in the maintenance budget through the investment in new technology, which should achieve savings of around £200,000 per year.”

The project will be delivered over a three year period through a joint venture with the private sector.



Key to the door of new affordable homes

New affordable housing schemes in the county are flourishing following the council's commitment to invest around £10 million each year to meet housing need.

At the Hodgsons Road estate in Blyth new tenants Raymond Massey and Evelyn Wilkinson received a giant key outside their property to mark the move into their new home.

Councillor Allan Hepple, policy board member at Northumberland County Council, said: "Seeing tenants like Raymond and Evelyn settling into their new home is what our affordable housing programme is all about.

"These are the first of almost 400 council homes we'll be building by 2016 and more families who've been on our housing waiting list for far too long will in future have access to the homes they need."

The Hodgsons Road project is seeing £7.3 million invested in affordable housing, including the demolition and rebuilding of 54 homes and improvements to other houses on the estate. There will also be changes to the environment around the estate, including installation of the latest energy efficient street lighting.



Photo: Councillor Kath Nisbet, civic head of Northumberland County Council, presents a giant key to new tenants Raymond Massey and Evelyn Wilkinson at Hodgsons Road estate in Blyth.

Two further schemes in Blyth are also underway, with 60 new homes being built at Tynedale Drive and 66 one bedroom flats, two bedroom bungalows and two, three and four bedroom homes at a further site at South Newsham.

Planning permission was granted last month for 48 new affordable homes at

Dandsfield Square in Amble and a further six schemes have been approved and are now progressing through the planning process. The other schemes are at Roberts Lodge in Berwick, Embleton Quarry, Fairfield View in Shilbottle, Whin Hill in Craster, The Martins in Wooler and Morpeth Road in Blyth.

Bridge lights put Berwick in world spotlight

A project that has illuminated the arches of Berwick's Royal Border Bridge to create a stunning and iconic night-time image is capturing world-wide interest.

Images of the bridge lights have been placed on the websites of the world-famous international news agency, Reuters and even the American daily newspaper, The Washington Post, generating many "wow!" comments - along with interest in the town.

Closer to home, photos of the Royal Border Bridge lights are featured on many 2014 calendars and are becoming regular backgrounds on local television weather forecasts in much the same way as the Angel of the North first did 16 years ago.

Funded mainly by grants from The Railway Heritage Trust and One North East's Market Town Welcome Programme, the lights were installed in 2010 following the end of Berwick History Society's successful 'Stephenson 150' celebrations. These were held

to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the death of the great engineer Sir Robert Stephenson who designed and built the bridge.

Northumberland County Council helped the project partners by funding the work to divert electricity and data cabling from the river bed to the bridge.



Photo: This stunning picture of Berwick's Royal Border Bridge was taken by local photographer Graeme Peacock.

Could you be a long term foster carer?

Long term fostering – a different type of foster care

Some children in Northumberland are waiting to be matched with long term foster carers who can look after them until they are ready to fly the nest. This type of foster care may suit you and your family more than traditional short term foster care.

Children are usually between seven and twelve years old

when they go to live with long term foster carers. They need a stable, loving environment and peace of mind that they can stay as long as they need.

The Northumberland Family Placement Service is now recruiting long term foster carers.

The team work closely to match children with the right person or family.

Foster carers come from all walks of life. They may

be currently working or unemployed, live alone or with a partner, or in a family with older children. They receive a full package of support, training, a weekly fee and a generous allowance for each child living with them.

Foster carer Lisa said: "The role is so rewarding - you help children throughout their childhood and beyond; plus it is great to work as part of a dedicated team for children and young people in the local community."

Could you be their new family?

The following are examples of children waiting for long term foster care – their names have been changed to protect their identities.

Jack is a well-mannered seven year old. He has a slight learning disability and needs encouragement to talk. He wants to keep in touch with his sister, aunt and parents.

Melissa is a sporty eleven year old who loves to sing. We are helping her to be more confident in life. She says a family with a horse or dog would be fab!

Matthew and James are brothers aged nine and eight who are great fun to be with. James is doing well academically. Matthew finds it hard to concentrate, as he worries about the rest of his family, but he is making good progress. Both enjoy outdoor activities, especially football. They really need to stay together.

Please visit our website to enquire, find out more, check out our information events diary or to download an information pack: fostering.northumberland.gov.uk

Tel: 01670 62 62 62

Email: familyplacement@northumberland.gov.uk



Thousands have their say on local plan



Photo: Residents look at proposed plans at a public consultation meeting in Ponteland.

Thousands of Northumberland residents have had their say during the latest consultation on a plan that will shape the county up to 2031.

Almost 1,000 people attended organised events. Many took part in an online forum and the council has received thousands of individual comments on the issues highlighted in the preferred options for housing, employment and the Green Belt.

The most recent stage of consultation on the plan outlined detailed evidence which shows that for Northumberland to be economically viable into the future it needs more homes for working families.

The details show that the county needs a population that will not only support existing and new jobs but also sustain and develop local services and businesses safeguarding the future of our local communities.

Councillor Allan Hepple, policy board member for planning, housing and regeneration, said: “We are extremely pleased with the response from residents and organisations across Northumberland.

“At each stage of the development of this plan we have listened carefully and responded to feedback provided, and reflected this in the emerging core strategy.

“We will be carefully considering all comments and feedback

received, and taking these into account in the next phase of development of the plan.”

The next phase of consultation on the core strategy is scheduled to take place from April this year – when residents will be able to comment on a full draft document.

“We are extremely pleased with the response from residents and organisations across Northumberland”

During the coming months the council will be doing further work with local communities to refine the plan – including meetings with town and parish councils and

other local groups such as neighbourhood plan groups.

If you want to register your interest in commenting on a future version of the plan please visit www.northumberland.gov.uk/corestrategy to find out how.

Dog fouling 2013



This year the council will hand out over **half a million free poop scoop bags.**

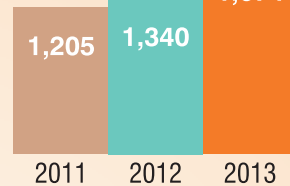


There have been four successful court prosecutions with two pending.

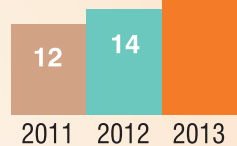
41 Fixed Penalty Notices issued in rural areas, and **40** in the South East.

Reporting dog fouling online is up 107% since the start of the Don't stand for it campaign.

Dog fouling complaints



Fixed Penalty Notices



The Animal Welfare Team work in partnership with the Dogs Trust to provide **free micro chipping and neutering** initiatives.



NCC has a zero tolerance policy for dog fouling. Anyone witnessed not cleaning up after their dog will be issued with a **£75 fixed penalty notice.** If a fixed penalty notice is not paid within 14 days of its issue, offenders will be prosecuted for the offence in court and **could face a fine of up to £1,000.**

When in a public area, the law states that dogs must wear a collar and tag with the owner's name and contact details inscribed (maximum penalty is £5,000). NCC provides a free dog registration service that provides a tag with a unique number. Owners details are stored on a database that can be accessed if the dog is found.



Dogs must be kept on a lead when they are on A or B roads and adjoining footpaths and verges.



Animal Welfare deal with over **2,000 stray/lost dog reports** each year.

Last year the Animal Welfare Team was **awarded an RSPCA Gold Footprint award** for the 2nd time.



NCC has five Animal Welfare Officers to cover all of Northumberland. In **2013 21 officers were added to the dog fouling action taskforce** increasing the numbers to 31 in total.

Please report irresponsible dog owners to the council, we need your help to catch offenders (area telephone numbers on page 4).





Free parking starts in April

Car parking in council-run car parks and on street parking places will be free in some Northumberland towns from 1 April.

The decision to introduce free parking was made after the council asked town and parish councils and local communities whether they wished to remove the charges which are currently in place.

As a result, from 1 April parking will be free in council run car parks and on-street parking places in Alwick, Bamburgh, Beadnell, Berwick

(except Berwick Railway Station car park), Hexham, Morpeth, Rothbury and Wooler.

Parking charges will be retained in Corbridge, Craster, Holy Island, Newton by the Sea and Seahouses.

The council's Labour administration pledged before taking power in May to allow local communities to come up with parking solutions that suit local needs.

Councillor Ian Swithenbank, policy board member for streetcare and environment, said: "We believe free parking has real benefits for residents,

businesses and visitors but we left the decision to local communities. We understand and appreciate that for traffic management reasons some communities are unable to take up the offer."

Enforcement of time limits and other restrictions such as parking outside of marked bays will remain in place. Enforcing the time limits in short stay parking areas will ensure turnover of high demand parking spaces.

For more information and a Q and A on the new arrangements go to: parking.northumberland.gov.uk

Energy efficiency scheme is heating up Northumberland

Households in Northumberland have benefited from warmer homes and lower bills this winter, following the launch of the UK's largest energy efficiency project, Warm Up North, last autumn.

Launched in partnership with Northumberland County Council, the ground-breaking initiative has been set up to tackle fuel poverty and help lower energy bills.

Eligible residents could benefit from part or fully-funded measures that could be installed in their homes, making them more efficient and reducing their energy

consumption, including hard to treat cavity wall, solid wall and loft insulation, new 'A-rated' boilers and boiler repairs.

The scheme covers private and rented homes, and social housing as well as publicly owned buildings such as offices, health and educational properties.

For more information on Warm Up North contact the team on 0800 294 8073 or visit www.warmupnorth.com

Warm Up North
Save Energy. Save Money.
Make your home more comfortable.

Contact Warm Up North FREE* on: 0800 294 8073
www.warmupnorth.com

*Applies to calls from a BT landline only, other providers costs may vary.

What's on

March

Seven Ages

Friday 7 March, 7.30pm - 10pm
Middleton Village Hall
Booking is essential
Phone 01670 772600

Film: The Bucket List

Friday 7 March, 7pm - 9pm
Morpeth Town Hall
Price: £5
Phone 01670 503866

Luxury Antiques Weekend

Linden Hall Hotel Golf &
Country Club, Longhorsley
Friday 7 March 11am - 6pm ,
Saturday 8 10.30am - 6pm and
Sunday 9 10.30 - 5pm
Phone 01797 252030
info@adfl.co.uk
www.lindenhallfair.com

Torchlight Tour

Saturday 8 March, 7pm - 9pm
Belsay Hall, Castle & Gardens
Booking is essential
Phone 01661 881 636
www.english-heritage.org.uk/
Belsay

Childhood in Felton

Tuesday 18 March, 7.30pm
Felton Village Hall
Phone 01670 787308

North Tourism Fair

Wednesday 19 March,
10am - 2.30pm
Willowburn Sports & Leisure
Centre, Alnwick
Phone 07894 402766
www.northtourismfair.co.uk

West Tourism Fair

Thursday 20 March,
10am - 2.30pm
Wentworth Leisure Centre,
Hexham
Phone 07894 402766
www.northtourismfair.co.uk

Morpeth St.George's Community Players Joan Littlewood's 'Oh What A Lovely War'

March 20 - 22, 7.30pm
Price: £6 and £5 (concessions)
St.George's Church Hall
Morpeth
Phone 01670 812870

Border Natural History Society

Wednesday 26 March, 7:30pm
Bellingham Middle School
Price: £2
Phone 01434 221284

Netherton Folk Club

Saturday 29 March, ends 11pm
Netherton Memorial Hall
Price: £2
Phone 01699 630258 or 631030

April

Film: Song for Marion

Friday 4 April, 7pm - 9pm
Morpeth Town Hall
Price: £5
Phone 01670 503866

Ceilidh Dance

Saturday 5 April 2014
Ponteland Memorial Hall
7:30pm, Price £16, includes
supper. In aid of the Mountain
Rescue Team
For tickets email:
l.a.old@ncl.ac.uk
Phone 01670 730550



Berwick Walking Festival

Saturday 5, Sunday 6 and
Monday 7 April
Berwick and the surrounding
area
www.berwickwalking.co.uk

Netherton Folk Club

Saturday 12 April,
7:30pm - 11pm
Netherton Memorial Hall
Price: £2
Phone 01669 630258 or 631030

The Pegasus and its Wreck 1843

Tuesday 22 April
Felton Village Hall
Phone 01670 787308

Border Natural History Society

Wednesday 30 April, 7:30pm
Bellingham Middle School
Price: £2
Phone 01434 221284

May

Cullercoats, Cobbles, Creels and Clogs

Monday 19 May, 7.30pm
Felton Village Hall
Phone 01670 787308

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